



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Site Update - DRAFT

San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site

Harris County, Texas

March 2014

This fact sheet will tell you about:

- Site Background
- Site Contaminants
- Groundwater Sampling Results
- Residential Soil Sampling Results
- Containment in Capped Areas
- Community Engagement
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Site Background

The San Jacinto River Waste Pits Site (Site) is on the western bank of the San Jacinto River, in Harris County, Texas, immediately north and south of the Interstate Highway 10 (I-10) bridge over the San Jacinto River and is located east of the City of Houston between two unincorporated areas known as Channelview and Highlands. The Site was constructed in the 1960s for disposal of pulp and paper mill waste. The Site's waste pits consist of impoundments north of I-10 and a disposal area south of I-10. EPA is currently evaluating remedial alternatives to address contamination at the Site.

The Site was placed on the National Priorities List in March of 2008.

Site Contaminants

Soil, sediment and fish tissue sampled during Site investigations indicate that dioxins are the chemicals that need to be addressed. EPA is currently evaluating remedial alternatives to address dioxins at the Site.

About Dioxin

Dioxins are produced from a variety of natural and man-made processes, primarily involving burning or combustion. Sources of dioxin include petroleum refining, forest fires, diesel heavy-duty trucks, back-yard barrel burning, diesel off-road equipment, automobiles using leaded gasoline, oil-fired utilities, cigarette smoke, boilers/industrial furnaces, volcanic activity, and drum reclamation among others. The dioxin found in the site impoundments originated from the Champion International Paper Mill wastewater treatment process. At the time of site disposal

activities in 1965, there was no knowledge that dioxin was present in the materials placed into the impoundments. Dioxins are adhered to the materials in the impoundments and are virtually insoluble in water.

Groundwater Quality

The results of the groundwater sampling indicate that dioxins have not migrated to the deeper aquifer, which is a drinking water source, nor have dioxins migrated to surface water. Because dioxins are virtually insoluble, they do not move readily in the groundwater system. Groundwater is neither a transport pathway nor an exposure pathway of concern.

A total of 11 monitoring wells were installed and groundwater samples were collected from across the site from 2011 to 2013. Several of the wells were installed within the aquifer below the Beaumont Clay, which is a drinking water source. No dioxins were detected in the deep wells.

Residential Soil Sampling

The results of the residential soil sampling program show that dioxins in soil in residential areas near the site are no different than background concentrations (for example soil in public parks of Houston) and are below levels considered protective by USEPA for residential soils. As noted above, dioxins originate from a variety of sources.

In 2011 and 2012 soil samples were collected from yards in two residential areas: an area to the west of the Site (between Meadowbrook and River Road), and a second area along the eastern shoreline of the San Jacinto River to the northeast of the impoundments.

Containment in Capped Areas

The wastes in the impoundments are effectively contained by the armored cap installed in 2011. The armored cap includes three layers of protective geotextile and geomembrane covered by rock, and was designed and constructed in accordance with USEPA and US Army Corps of Engineers design guidance to withstand major storms, including those that would only occur once every 500 years. The cap continues to be routinely monitored and maintained. The remedial alternatives that EPA is evaluating include methods of enhancing the effectiveness and

reliability of the cap as well as options for treating or removing waste and affected sediment.

Community Engagement

In 2012, EPA awarded a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) to the Galveston Bay Foundation. Galveston Bay is the lead agency to interpret site information and data for the community with the assistance of a Technical Advisor.

The San Jacinto Community Awareness Committee (CAC), comprised of EPA, state and Harris County agencies, also meets frequently to review and respond to site community engagement and public issues impacted by the site.

For more information

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Site Repository
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All inquiries from the news media should be directed to the Region 6 Press Office at 214.665.2200.

San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site on the internet:

<http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/pdf/files/san-jacinto-tx.pdf>

http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/san_jacinto/

https://www.epaos.org/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=6534

To receive a Spanish translation of this fact sheet call U.S. EPA at 1.800.533.3508 (toll-free).

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